



Regional Transportation Authority

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RTA achieves commitment to voters in its first five years

Three roadway corridor projects, 39 bus pullouts, 77 intersection safety and capacity projects, and a total of 44 Sun Tran evening and weekend routes were among the many projects completed or services expanded in the past five years as part of the 20-year, \$2.1 billion Regional Transportation Authority plan.

The multi-modal transportation plan received voter approval by a 3-2 margin on May 16, 2006. This was the first time in approximately 20 years that Pima County voters passed a major transportation initiative seeking local public funding.

"We started with a diverse group of people on our citizens' advisory committee to ensure that we had all interested parties represented," said RTA Executive Director Gary Hayes. "This was a critical factor in the development of a balanced plan with half the funding targeted toward roadway improvements and a quarter of the funding slated for the increasingly popular mode of transit."

To date, the RTA has completed more than 400 projects and has met its promise to deliver in the first five-year period of the RTA plan. The RTA Board recently authorized the issuance of \$152 million in bonds to help fund roadway projects in the next few years of the second period of the plan.

"The RTA Board approved these bonds knowing that they were always part of the RTA plan funding and would be used to close the gaps when needed during economic swings," said RTA Board Chair Jennifer Eckstrom. "This will allow continued construction of RTA roadway projects, which will keep people employed at a time when our local economy is still recovering."

Through October 2009, RTA projects helped create 700 new jobs, according to the Economic and Business Research Center at the University of Arizona Eller College of Management.

Hayes said the RTA Board initially instructed staff and member jurisdictions to accelerate

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smaller projects in the RTA plan in order to start construction on smaller projects while the larger, more complex road projects were under design.

"The RTA Board wanted to see the dirt flying," Hayes said. On May 11, 2009, the first RTA roadway project to break ground was the Twin Peaks Interchange project. The first two RTA roadway projects to be completed in November 2010 were the Twin Peaks Interchange and Road. Twin Peaks Road, formerly Camino de Mañana, started construction in late August 2009 and was renamed by the Marana Town Council.

Grant Road, the largest roadway project in the plan, will get under way this fall with an intersection project at Grant and Oracle. The rest of the \$167 million project will be phased in over the remaining 15 years of the plan.

The Modern Streetcar project became reality when the City of Tucson received \$63 million in federal funding through a Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) discretionary grant. This serves as part of the matching funds to the RTA's \$75 million toward capital costs. The RTA also will fund approximately \$13 million for operations. The streetcar project, a 3.9-mile route between the Arizona Health Sciences Center and the west side of downtown, is expected to cost \$196.8 million and be operational by the fall of 2013.

State Rep. Steve Farley, D-Tucson, and an original member of the RTA Citizens Advisory Committee, said, "This Modern Streetcar is an essential piece of the RTA package. The project already has created large numbers of private-sector jobs and is spurring significant economic development for the entire region. Congratulations to the RTA and the City of Tucson for pushing this project to fruition."

Projects in the plan are managed by the local jurisdictions. Pima County has two major corridor projects, along La Cañada and La Cholla, in progress. "In many projects, the RTA provides all or a significant portion of the dollars to complete these projects," said Pima County Department of Transportation Director Priscilla Cornelio. "We are fortunate that the voters had the wisdom to see the need for a regional transportation plan to help Pima County and our local jurisdictions catch up on needed projects that will improve travel safety and our regional mobility."

Given historical funding issues with prior transportation initiatives, the RTA Board established a Citizens Accountability for Regional Transportation (CART) Committee to oversee implementation of the plan as voters approved.

"We have consistently been impressed, but not surprised, that the RTA has delivered on the projects as presented in the RTA ballot," said RTA CART Chair Kelle Maslyn. "This is a tremendous undertaking, and it's a major accomplishment in this environment to be on track with where the RTA said it would be."

The Regional Transportation Authority is the fiscal manager of the \$2.1 billion plan approved by Pima County voters on May 16, 2006. The RTA Board is comprised of representatives from the local jurisdictions in Pima County, including the cities of Tucson and South Tucson, Pima County, the towns of Marana, Oro Valley and Sahuarita, the Pascua Yaqui Tribe and the Tohono O'odham Nation. A representative of the Arizona State Transportation Board also serves on the board. For more information about the RTA plan, visit www.RTAmobility.com or call (520) 770-9410.